

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

JOHN 1:1-18

A COMMUNION SERMON
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John does not tell us of the birth of Jesus. Instead, John begins his gospel with one of the greatest theological statements in the New Testament. If I had a lick of sense, I would have read those words of John 1:1-18, and gone straight to what comes next in the order of service. Nothing I can say can add to those words. Nothing I can say can magnify the great truths contained in those verses.

But, in case any of you weren't paying attention as I read them, perhaps I can hit the highlights, bring forth the points that John is making.

First, it is important to know that John is using the word, "Logos", which we translate as "word", to describe Jesus. Jesus is the living word of God. We 21st Century Christians don't have an understanding of the power of the Word, God's Word, that first century Christians had.

Some have said that Logos theology comes from the Greeks, and was borrowed and baptized by the early Christians just as we have borrowed and baptized so much from other cultures and traditions. But the concept of God's word as power, God's word as the expression of who God is, is older than the Greek influence on the New Testament. God's word, God's voice, God's speaking, is the expression of God's presence and God's power from the first day of Creation in Genesis.

I do not think it is an accident that John begins his gospel with the same words in Greek that begin Genesis in the Hebrew: "In the beginning..."

John makes the point that Jesus was in the beginning with God, and that Jesus is God, and that nothing was created without Jesus's presence and knowledge and consent. Jesus is co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit.

But Jesus is not only the Living Word, Jesus is the Light of the World, and John makes that point as well: on the first day of Creation, when God said "Let there be light", Jesus was already the light. And the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

Of all the words of John 1, those are perhaps the ones I cherish the most: the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Sometimes it seems as though the world is dark and dreary, as though sin and evil, lies and falsehoods, hate and violence, are winning. But it only takes one little light, one shining point of light, to prove that all is not darkness, to show that the light still shines.

John tells us a great truth in this text: that Jesus was in the world, and the world did not know Him. That He came to His own people, the Jews, the Children of Israel, and they did not accept Him, did not receive Him. It is still true that Jesus is in the world, and it is still true that there are people who do not know Him, who will not accept Him, who will not receive Him.

But the great truth remains that all who do receive Him, who do believe in His name, become Children of God, born of and subject to, the will of God.

The very concept of being a child of God, the very words, is repugnant to the Islamic faith. They cannot understand how one can be born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh but by the will of God. They reject Jesus, and they reject Christianity, and they reject those of us who claim to be children of God, because they cannot understand or accept that great truth.

I rejoice that I am a child of God. I rejoice that I can pray to God as Father. I rejoice that nothing can separate me from the love of God made known in Jesus Christ our Lord. And I despair for those who cannot accept Him, who reject His love for them.

When John says that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, John is telling us that Jesus the Son of God who was God became a human being just as we are human beings. Jesus wore diapers. That's what those swaddling clothes are. Jesus bruised when He was struck, Jesus bled when He was cut, Jesus cried out in pain when He was wounded for our transgressions.

When we say that we have beheld His glory, we recall the words that He spoke on the night of His betrayal, the words that He spoke in His high priestly prayer, found in John 17: "Father, the hour has come to glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed."

The Word became flesh. He lived among us full of grace and truth. He died for our sins upon the cross, to glorify God, and to be glorified by God.

In the lights of the Christmas season, in the beautiful music of the Christmas carols and hymns, in the warmth of the holy season in our hearts, we have beheld His glory.

Don't let the light go out. Don't let the music be silenced. Don't let the warmth grow cold.

Our chief end, according to the Westminster Divines, is to glorify God, and to enjoy God for ever.

The Word becomes flesh and dwells among us as we glorify God.

So in this new and coming year, let us live as though everything we do, everything we are, every word we say, is to glorify God, as we propose to enjoy God forever.